

Assembly Bill No. 891

CHAPTER 651

An act to amend Sections 4504, 5246, and 17500 of, and to add Section 17400.5 to, the Family Code, and to amend Section 19271 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, relating to child support.

[Approved by Governor October 9, 2001. Filed with
Secretary of State October 10, 2001.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 891, Goldberg. Child support: disabled noncustodial parents.

Existing law governs child support, and sets forth guidelines for determining the annual net disposable income of each parent for these purposes. Amounts attributable to certain items must be deducted from the annual gross income of each parent in determining the annual net disposable income. Existing law also provides that if a court has ordered a noncustodial parent to pay child support, payments for the support of the child made by the federal government pursuant to the Social Security Act or the Railroad Retirement Act because of the retirement or disability of the noncustodial parent and transmitted to the custodial parent or other child support obligee each month are credited toward the amount ordered by the court to be paid for that month by the noncustodial parent for support of the child, unless those payments were taken into consideration by the court in determining the amount of the support to be paid. Existing law requires local child support agencies to monitor child support cases and seek modifications when needed.

This bill would revise the above described provision relating to federal payments to include benefits paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The bill would require a custodial parent who has been notified that the noncustodial parent is receiving any of the federal benefits described above, as specified, to contact the appropriate federal agency within 30 days of receiving that notification to verify the eligibility of the child to receive payments from the federal government on the basis of the noncustodial parent's disability. The bill would require local child support agencies to prepare and file a motion to modify a support obligation within 30 days of receiving verification from a noncustodial parent or other source of the receipt of specified benefits. By imposing additional duties on local child support agencies, the bill would create a state-mandated local program. The bill would make related changes.

Existing law provides that the Franchise Tax Board has the responsibility for accounts receivable management of child support



delinquencies. The Franchise Tax Board is responsible for actions taken on any child support delinquency account transferred to that agency as necessary for recovering delinquent child support payments. Among other duties, the Franchise Tax Board is responsible for issuing and modifying earnings assignment orders on behalf of the local child support agency in order to take collection actions to recover delinquent child support payments.

Existing law establishes a state supplementary income program which provides a monthly income based on need, as specified, to aged, blind, or disabled persons.

This bill would provide that a child support delinquency may not be referred to the Franchise Tax Board and if already referred, must be withdrawn, rescinded, or otherwise recalled, if the obligor is receiving payments under the state supplementary income program for aged, blind, and disabled persons, or but for certain excess income, would be eligible for those payments, as specified. The bill would prohibit an order/notice to withhold income issued by a local child support agency in the case of a disabled obligor, as specified, from exceeding a specified amount.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement, including the creation of a State Mandates Claims Fund to pay the costs of mandates that do not exceed \$1,000,000 statewide and other procedures for claims whose statewide costs exceed \$1,000,000.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 4504 of the Family Code is amended to read:

4504. (a) If the noncustodial parent is receiving payments from the federal government pursuant to the Social Security Act or Railroad Retirement Act, or from the Department of Veterans Affairs because of the retirement or disability of the noncustodial parent and the noncustodial parent notifies the custodial person, or notifies the local child support agency in a case being enforced by the local child support agency pursuant to Title IV-D of the Social Security Act, then the custodial parent or other child support obligee shall contact the appropriate federal agency within 30 days of receiving notification that the noncustodial parent is receiving those payments to verify eligibility



for each child to receive payments from the federal government because of the disability of the noncustodial parent. If the child is potentially eligible for those payments, the custodial parent or other child support obligee shall apply for and cooperate with the appropriate federal agency for the receipt of those benefits on behalf of each child. The noncustodial parent shall cooperate with the custodial parent or other child support obligee in making that application and shall provide any information necessary to complete the application.

(b) If the court has ordered a noncustodial parent to pay for the support of a child, payments for the support of the child made by the federal government pursuant to the Social Security Act or Railroad Retirement Act, or by the Department of Veterans Affairs because of the retirement or disability of the noncustodial parent and received by the custodial parent or other child support obligee each month shall be credited toward the amount ordered by the court to be paid for that month by the noncustodial parent for support of the child unless the payments made by the federal government were taken into consideration by the court in determining the amount of support to be paid. If a lump-sum payment which represents payments for more than one month is received by the custodial parent or other child support obligee, credit shall be given for each month for which the lump-sum payment was made.

(c) If the custodial parent or other child support obligee refuses to apply for those benefits or fails to cooperate with the appropriate federal agency in completing the application but the child or children otherwise are eligible to receive those benefits, the noncustodial parent shall be credited toward the amount ordered by the court to be paid for that month by the noncustodial parent for support of the child or children in the amount of payment that the child or children would have received that month had the custodial parent or other child support obligee completed an application for the benefits if the noncustodial parent provides evidence to the local child support agency indicating the amount the child or children would have received. The credit for those payments shall continue until the child or children would no longer be eligible for those benefits or the order for child support for the child or children is no longer in effect, whichever occurs first.

SEC. 2. Section 5246 of the Family Code is amended to read:

5246. (a) This section applies only to Title IV-D cases where support enforcement services are being provided by the local child support agency pursuant to Section 17400.

(b) In lieu of an earnings assignment order signed by a judicial officer, the local child support agency may serve on the employer a notice of assignment in the manner specified in Section 5232. An order/notice to withhold income for child support shall have the same force and effect



as an earnings assignment order signed by a judicial officer. An order/notice to withhold income for child support, when used under this section, shall be considered a notice and shall not require the signature of a judicial officer.

(c) Pursuant to Section 666 of Title 42 of the United States Code, the federally mandated order/notice to withhold income for child support shall be used for the purposes described in this section.

(d) (1) An order/notice to withhold income may not reduce the current amount withheld for court-ordered child support.

(2) If the underlying court order for support does not provide for an arrearage payment, or if an additional arrearage accrues after the date of the court order for support, the local child support agency may send an order/notice to withhold income for child support that shall be used for the purposes described in this section directly to the employer which specifies the updated arrearage amount and directs the employer to withhold an additional amount to be applied towards liquidation of the arrearages not to exceed the maximum amount permitted by Section 1673(b) of Title 15 of the United States Code.

(3) Notwithstanding paragraph (2), if an obligor is disabled, meets the SSI resource test, and is receiving Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payments (SSI/SSP) or, but for excess income as described in Section 416.1100 et seq. of Part 416 of Title 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations, would be eligible to receive SSI/SSP, pursuant to Section 12200 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, and the obligor has supplied the local child support agency with proof of his or her eligibility for and, if applicable, receipt of, SSI/SSP or Social Security Disability Insurance benefits, then the order/notice to withhold income issued by the local child support agency for the liquidation of the arrearage shall not exceed 5 percent of the obligor's total monthly Social Security Disability payments under Title II of the Social Security Act.

(e) If the obligor requests a hearing, a hearing date shall be scheduled within 20 days of the filing of the request with the court. The clerk of the court shall provide notice of the hearing to the local child support agency and the obligor no later than 10 days prior to the hearing.

(1) If at the hearing the obligor establishes that he or she is not the obligor or good cause or an alternative arrangement as provided in Section 5260, the court may order that service of the order/notice to withhold income for child support be quashed. If the court quashes service of the order/notice to withhold income for child support, the local child support agency shall notify the employer within 10 days.

(2) If the obligor contends at the hearing that the payment of arrearages at the rate specified in the order/notice to withhold income for



child support is excessive or that the total arrearages owing is incorrect, and if it is determined that payment of the arrearages at the rate specified in this section creates an undue hardship upon the obligor or that the withholding would exceed the maximum amount permitted by Section 1673(b) of Title 15 of the United States Code Annotated, the rate at which the arrearages must be paid shall be reduced to a rate that is fair and reasonable considering the circumstances of the parties and the best interest of the child. If it is determined at a hearing that the total amount of arrearages calculated is erroneous, the court shall modify the amount calculated to the correct amount. If the court modifies the total amount of arrearages owed or reduces the monthly payment due on the arrearages, the local child support agency shall serve the employer with an amended order/notice to withhold income for child support within 10 days.

(f) If an obligor's current support obligation has terminated by operation of law, the local child support agency may serve an order/notice to withhold income for child support on the employer which directs the employer to continue withholding from the obligor's earnings an amount to be applied towards liquidation of the arrearages, not to exceed the maximum amount permitted by Section 1673(b) of Title 15 of the United States Code, until such time that the employer is notified by the local child support agency that the arrearages have been paid in full. The employer shall provide the obligor with a copy of the order/notice to withhold income for child support and a blank form that the obligor may file with the court to request a hearing to modify or quash the assignment with instructions on how to file the form and obtain a hearing date. The obligor shall be entitled to the same rights to a hearing as specified in subdivision (e).

(g) The local child support agency shall retain a copy of the order/notice to withhold income for child support and shall file a copy with the court whenever a hearing concerning the order/notice to withhold income for child support is requested.

(h) The local child support agency may transmit an order/notice to withhold income for child support and other forms required by this section to the employer through electronic means.

SEC. 3. Section 17400.5 is added to the Family Code, to read:

17400.5. If an obligor has an ongoing child support order being enforced by a local child support pursuant to Title IV-D of the Social Security Act and the obligor is disabled, meets the SSI resource test, and is receiving Supplemental Security Income/State Supplemental Payments (SSI/SSP) or, but for excess income as described in Section 416.1100 et seq. of Part 416 of Title 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations, would be eligible to receive as SSI/SSP, pursuant to



Section 12200 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, and the obligor has supplied the local child support agency with proof of his or her eligibility for, and, if applicable, receipt of, SSI/SSP or Social Security Disability Insurance benefits, then the local child support agency shall prepare and file a motion to modify the support obligation within 30 days of receipt of verification from the noncustodial parent or any other source of the receipt of SSI/SSP or Social Security Disability Insurance benefits. The local child support agency shall serve the motion on both the noncustodial parent and custodial person and any modification of the support order entered pursuant to the motion shall be effective as provided in Section 3653 of the Family Code.

SEC. 4. Section 17500 of the Family Code is amended to read:

17500. (a) In carrying out its obligations under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 651 et seq.), the local child support agency shall have the responsibility for promptly and effectively collecting and enforcing child support obligations.

(b) The local child support agency is the public agency responsible for administering wage withholding for the purposes of Title IV-D of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 651 et seq.).

(c) Except as provided in paragraph (3) of subdivision (e) of Section 19271 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, the local child support agency shall transfer child support delinquencies to the Franchise Tax Board for collection purposes in the form and manner and at the time prescribed by the Franchise Tax Board. Collection shall be made by the Franchise Tax Board in accordance with Section 19271 of the Revenue and Taxation Code. For purposes of this subdivision, “child support delinquency” means an arrearage or otherwise past due amount that accrues when an obligor fails to make any court-ordered support payment when due, which is more than 60 days past due, and the aggregate amount of which exceeds one hundred dollars (\$100).

(1) If a child support delinquency exists at the time a case is opened by the local child support agency, the responsibility for the collection of the child support delinquency shall be transferred to the Franchise Tax Board no later than 30 days after receipt of the case by the local child support agency.

(2) The transfer of child support delinquencies required by this subdivision is in support of the local child support agency for purposes of efficient and effective child support enforcement and shall not in any manner transfer any responsibilities the local child support agency may have and any responsibilities the Department of Child Support Services may have as the Title IV-D agency.

SEC. 5. Section 19271 of the Revenue and Taxation Code is amended to read:



19271. (a) (1) For purposes of this article:

(A) “Child support delinquency” means a delinquency defined in subdivision (c) of Section 17500 of the Family Code.

(B) “Earnings” may include the items described in Section 5206 of the Family Code.

(2) At least 20 days prior to the date that the Franchise Tax Board commences collection action under this article, the Franchise Tax Board shall mail notice of the amount due to the obligated parent at the last known address and advise the obligated parent that failure to pay will result in collection action. If the obligated parent disagrees with the amount due, the obligated parent shall be instructed to contact the local child support agency to resolve the disagreement.

(b) (1) (A) Except as otherwise provided in subparagraph (B), when a delinquency is transferred to the Franchise Tax Board pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 17500 of the Family Code, the amount of the child support delinquency shall be collected by the Franchise Tax Board in any manner authorized under the law for collection of a delinquent personal income tax liability. Notwithstanding Sections 5208 and 5246 of the Family Code, the issuance of an order and levy under Article 4 (commencing with Section 706.070) of Chapter 5 of Division 2 of Title 9 of Part 2 of the Code of Civil Procedure in the manner provided for earnings withholding orders for taxes is hereby authorized until the California Child Support Automation System is operational in all 58 California counties. When the California Child Support Automation System is operational in all 58 counties, any levy or other withholding of earnings of an employee by the Franchise Tax Board to collect an amount pursuant to this section shall be made in accordance with Sections 5208 and 5246 of the Family Code. Any other law providing for the collection of a delinquent personal income tax liability shall apply to any child support delinquency transferred to the Franchise Tax Board in the same manner and with the same force and effect and to the full extent as if the language of those laws had been incorporated in full into this article, except to the extent that any provision is either inconsistent with a provision of this article or is not relevant to this article.

(B) When a delinquency is transferred to the Franchise Tax Board, or at any time thereafter, if the obligated parent owes a delinquent personal income tax liability, the Franchise Tax Board shall not engage in, or shall cease, any involuntary collection action to collect the delinquent personal income tax liability, until the child support delinquency is paid in full. At any time, however, the Franchise Tax Board may mail any other notice to the taxpayer for voluntary payment of the delinquent personal income tax liability if the Franchise Tax Board determines that



collection of the delinquent personal income tax liability will not jeopardize collection of the child support delinquency. However, the Franchise Tax Board may engage in the collection of a delinquent personal income tax liability if the obligor has entered into a payment agreement for the child support delinquency and is in compliance with that agreement, and the Franchise Tax Board determines that collection of the delinquent personal income tax liability would not jeopardize payments under the child support payment agreement.

(C) For purposes of subparagraph (B):

(i) “Involuntary collection action” includes those actions authorized by Section 18670, 18670.5, 18671, or 19264, by Article 3 (commencing with Section 19231), or by Chapter 5 (commencing with Section 706.010) of Division 2 of Title 9 of Part 2 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

(ii) “Delinquent personal income tax liability” means any taxes, additions to tax, penalties, interest, fees, or other related amounts due and payable under Part 10 (commencing with Section 17001) or this part.

(iii) “Voluntary payment” means any payment made by obligated parents in response to any notice for voluntary payment mailed by the Franchise Tax Board.

(2) Any compensation, fee, commission, expense, or any other fee for service incurred by the Franchise Tax Board in the collection of a child support delinquency authorized under this article shall not be an obligation of, or collected from, the obligated parent. A transferred child support delinquency shall be final and due and payable to the State of California upon written notice to the obligated parent by the Franchise Tax Board.

(3) For purposes of administering this article:

(A) This chapter and Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 19501) shall apply, except as otherwise provided by this article.

(B) Any services, information, or enforcement remedies available to a local child support agency or the Title IV-D agency in collecting child support delinquencies or locating absent or noncustodial parents shall be available to the Franchise Tax Board for purposes of collecting child support delinquencies under this article, including, but not limited to, any information that may be disclosed by the Franchise Tax Board to the California Parent Locator Service under Section 19548. However, in no event shall the Franchise Tax Board take any additional enforcement remedies if a court has ordered an obligor to make scheduled payments on a child support arrearages obligation and the parent is in compliance with that order.

(C) A request by the Franchise Tax Board for information from a financial institution shall be treated in the same manner and to the same



extent as a request for information from a local child support agency referring to a support order pursuant to Section 17400 of the Family Code for purposes of Chapter 20 (commencing with Section 7460) of Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code (relating to governmental access to financial records), notwithstanding any other provision of law which is inconsistent or contrary to this paragraph.

(D) The amount to be withheld in an order and levy to collect child support delinquencies under Article 4 (commencing with Section 706.070) of Chapter 5 of Division 2 of Title 9 of Part 2 of the Code of Civil Procedure is the amount required to be withheld pursuant to an earnings withholding order for support under Section 706.052 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

(E) Nothing in this article shall be construed to modify the tax intercept provisions of Article 8 (commencing with Section 708.710) of Chapter 6 of Division 2 of Title 9 of Part 2 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

(c) Interest on the delinquency shall be computed pursuant to Section 685.010 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

(d) (1) In no event shall a collection under this article be construed to be a payment of income taxes imposed under this part.

(2) In the event an obligated parent overpays a liability imposed under this part, the overpayment shall not be credited against any delinquency collected pursuant to this article. In the event an overpayment of a liability imposed under this part is offset and distributed to a local child support agency pursuant to Sections 12419.3 and 12419.5 of the Government Code or Section 708.740 of the Code of Civil Procedure, and thereby reduces the amount of the referred delinquency, the local child support agency shall immediately notify the Franchise Tax Board of that reduction, unless the Franchise Tax Board directs otherwise.

(e) (1) The Franchise Tax Board shall administer this article, in conjunction with regulations adopted by the Department of Child Support Services in consultation with the Franchise Tax Board, including those set forth in Section 17306 of the Family Code.

(2) The Franchise Tax Board may transfer to or allow a local child support agency to retain a child support delinquency for a specified purpose for collection where the Franchise Tax Board determines, pursuant to regulations established by the Department of Child Support Services, that the transfer or retention of the delinquency for the purpose so specified will enhance the collectibility of the delinquency. The Franchise Tax Board, with the concurrence of the Department of Child Support Services, shall establish a process whereby a local child support agency may request and shall be allowed to withdraw, rescind, or



otherwise recall the transfer of an account that has been transferred to the Franchise Tax Board.

(3) If an obligor is disabled, meets the SSI resource test, and is receiving Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payments (SSI/SSP), or, but for excess income as described in Section 416.1100 et seq. of Part 416 of Title 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations, would be eligible to receive as Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payments (SSI/SSP), pursuant to Section 12200 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, and the obligor has supplied the local child support agency with proof of his or her eligibility for, and, if applicable, receipt of, SSI/SSP or Social Security Disability Insurance benefits, then the child support delinquency shall not be referred to the Franchise Tax Board for collection, and if referred, shall be withdrawn, rescinded, or otherwise recalled from the Franchise Tax Board by the local child support agency. The Franchise Tax Board shall not take any collection action, or if the agency has already taken collection action, shall cease collection actions in the case of a disabled obligor when the delinquency is withdrawn, rescinded, or otherwise recalled by the local child support agency in accordance with the process established as described in paragraph (2).

(f) Except as otherwise provided in this article, any child support delinquency transferred to the Franchise Tax Board pursuant to this article shall be treated as a child support delinquency for all other purposes, and any collection action by the local child support agency or the Franchise Tax Board with respect to any delinquency referred pursuant to this article shall have the same priority against attachment, execution, assignment, or other collection action as is provided by any other provision of state law.

(g) Except as otherwise specifically provided in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (b), the child support collection activities authorized by this article shall not interfere with the primary mission of the Franchise Tax Board to fairly and efficiently administer the Revenue and Taxation Code for which it is responsible.

(h) Information disclosed to the Franchise Tax Board shall be considered information that may be disclosed by the Franchise Tax Board under the authority of Section 19548 and may be disseminated by the Franchise Tax Board accordingly for the purposes specified in Sections 17505 and 17506 of the Family Code (in accordance with, and to the extent permitted by, Section 17514 of the Family Code and any other state or federal law).

(i) A local child support agency may not apply to the Department of Child Support Services for an exemption from the transfer of



responsibilities and authorities to the Franchise Tax Board under the Family Code or participation under Section 19271.6.

(j) Except in those cases meeting the specified circumstances described in the regulations or in accordance with the processes prescribed in paragraphs (2) and (3) of subdivision (e), a local child support agency shall not request or be allowed to retain, withdraw, rescind, or otherwise recall the transfer of a child support delinquency transferred to the Franchise Tax Board.

SEC. 6. Notwithstanding Section 17610 of the Government Code, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code. If the statewide cost of the claim for reimbursement does not exceed one million dollars (\$1,000,000), reimbursement shall be made from the State Mandates Claims Fund.

